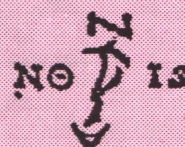
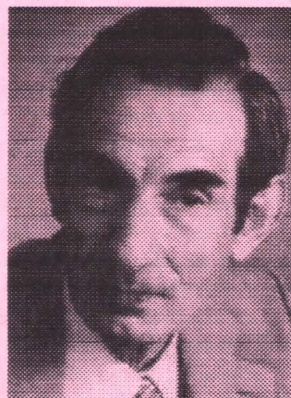


# MAGONIA

87



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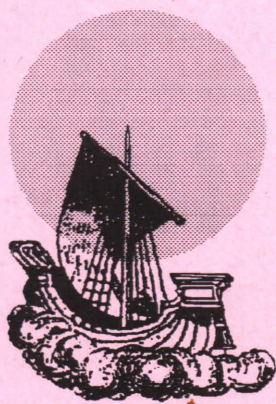


VVLNÉHVOM + SPES VNA. PAXITENTIVOM.  
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**Gareth Medway** decodes the men behind the Da Vinci Code  
**Andy Roberts** trips back to the sixties to explore the links between the  
 hippies and the saucers





**MAGONIA 87**  
(incorporating MUF0B 134)

**FEBRUARY 2005**

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PETER ROGERSON'S

# NORTHERN ECHOES

It's been a while now since I last wrote a Northern Echoes, September 1st 2001 to be exact, and that one was a sort of elegy on childhood innocence lost and warm safe summers in which flying saucers flew in the evening sunshine over small mid western towns promising the "ecstatic freedom of flight". Too spooky for comfort in light of what happened 10 days later!

These sort of odd, spooky, experiences seem to lie at the heart of ufology and the paranormal, and underly much of the passion in the subject. So much activity in these fields is aimed not at looking for evidence to find out what happened, but at finding what theologians call 'evidences' to provide proof of the existence of a transcendental realm. In the 17th century writers like Joseph Granville, Henry Moore, and the Cottons collected tales of ghosts, witches and remarkable occurrences to provide illustrations of the "certainty of the world of spirits", and to martial arguments to traduce 'sadducees' and atheists.

Ufological collections like Richard Hall's *UFO Evidence* perform the same function today, marshalling evidences of the "certainty of the world of extraterrestrials". UFO experiences join the 'wondrous experiences' which provide hints of a transcendental realm beyond the boundaries of the ordinary, and are are therefor seen as ineffable, spiritual experiences, which would be profaned if they could be explained by what the historian Walter Stephens calls nature and the imagination.

Though many ufologists profess that UFO experiences are generated by mortal extraterrestrials flying secular machines, their language and emotions suggest otherwise. If their dreams came true and the saucers landed on the White House Lawn, they would become yet more parts of the mundane world. Ufologists would smirk for a while and sneer at sceptics, but it would only be a few years, possibly only months, before they started arguing that explaining this or that wondrous experience in terms of the 6.15 flying saucer flight to Zeta Reticulli was to reduce it to the prosaic and human. The ETs would have been demystified.

It's not the solution which attracts but the mystery, and arguments about the reality of UFOs and psychical phenomena look as though they are coded God-talk. It's not about ETs and ectoplasm but about the existence of a sacred realm over and above what is seen as the world of the prosaic which crashes into our world transforming lives.

Ufology and related topics therefor have many of the properties of religions based on immediate personal experience, where all criticism is heresy, which devalues the meaning of the experience and denies the existence of an extramundane realm. But there is another religious tradition which has a surprisingly modern incarnation: the Protestant Puritan tradition which emphasizes the primary of God-given reason, sobriety and hard work. The Protestant work ethic places a strong opposition between reason and 'animal passion', hence its opposition to a set of human activities such as sex, drink, laziness etc which are seen as disturbing this reason.

This movement led much of 19th reform, including temperance, rational recreation, anti-vice leagues, opposition to animal cruelty etc. One of its current incarnations is CSICOP. But most members of CSICOP are atheists and humanists, how can they be a religious body? There is no reason why religious traditions cannot survive in the absence of belief in an anthropomorphic god, and CSICOP shows many features of the Puritan tradition. It emphasizes reason, hard work and application, it fights against perceived dangerous social ills, and appeals to a scientific natural theology, which, though clearly not of a traditional theistic nature, nevertheless holds at its heart a sense of the 'divine' harmony and beauty of the universe. CSICOP sees occult and paranormal beliefs as a kind of intellectual hard liquor threatening divine reason.

It has other attributes of a religion, offering conversion narratives from people who profess to have been mired in the sink of paranormalist sin until they were converted by attending a lecture or reading a book by James Randi, Paul Kurtz, etc, revealing the power of reason and setting them on the path of truth.

The current fear of occultism is rather new: there was no CSICOP up until the mid 1970s. For many years cultural élites in the West saw 'wondrous experiences' in exactly the way that Glanville, Baxter and More did; as providing 'evidences' against atheism and materialism, and especially 'godless atheistic communism'. Puritans who might have been suspicious of ecstatic religious experience were much more afraid of what might happen if the working class lost its fear of God and belief in the afterlife. They might want their goodies now and revolt. Further-

**Continued on page 17**



# A Saucer Full Of Secrets

Andy Roberts

"UFOs were not just in the air, they'd become a religion and the word a common sacrament to everyone who'd tripped." - Neil Oram

The word hippie conjures visions of brightly-clad young people rebelling against society whilst advocating peace, free love and the right to alter their consciousness when and how they chose. It's an appealing image, but one straight out of the imagination of a *Daily Mail* reader. For behind the fashions and fads, the hippie underground movement in the UK was responsible for the greatest expansion of interest and belief in fortaen phenomena in the last few centuries.

Social historians invariably associate the hippie movement with eastern beliefs such as Buddhism and Hinduism, from which they freely drew inspiration and imagery. That the hippies' interest in these philosophies has been well documented is understandable; these beliefs were exotic, vibrant and essentially alien to the

blinkered western world view of the 1960s. Flying Saucer culture however was already deeply embedded in the British cultural psyche and, courtesy of daily newspapers throughout the 1950s, present in the lives of those who would form the hippie movement known as the English Underground.

Although the Underground took the flying saucer myth to its heart, there is scant reference to it in histories of the period. The media, too, ignored the hippies' interest in flying saucers simply because it wasn't as visually immediate as the 'love-in', posters of Hindu deities or the wild sponta-

neity of music festivals. But the story of the English Underground's close encounter with ufology, although a little known area of the social history of flying saucers, is one worth telling.

In the mid 1960s, though flying saucers were being discussed among the influential group of post-beatniks and modern mystics who would form the core of the English Underground, the nascent movement lacked a voice. A figurehead was needed, someone who could breathe life into the background hum of belief in flying saucers, articulating it for the burgeoning hippie subculture.

That voice came in the form of John Michel, whose influence on the English Underground cannot be overestimated. Like many of his generation Michel was disillusioned by the acquisitive post war society, "...when I was at Cambridge the whole atmosphere was extremely rationalistic materialistic. Everyone believed the current academic orthodoxies of the time and there seemed no way of questioning them"

UFOs first caught Michel's imagination in the 1950s when he noticed, "It was quite obvious that people were having experiences that weren't allowed for within the context of our education. There was a split between the view of the world we'd been taught and accepted unquestioningly and the world of actual experience." To Michel flying saucers were more than just 'nuts-and-bolts' craft, they were one of a number of phenomena





"The strange lights and other phenomena of the post-War period were portents of a radical change in human consciousness coinciding with the dawn of the Aquarian Age."



To Michel flying saucers were more than just 'nuts-and-bolts' craft, they were one of a number of phenomena which became attached to the 'Matter of Britain'.

which became attached to the 'Matter of Britain'. This largely concerned itself with the legends of King Arthur and the Holy Grail and was focused on the Somerset town of Glastonbury.

Glastonbury is firmly embedded in the public consciousness as a centre of all things alternate and strange. But this is not a recent phenomenon. Glastonbury has been the pulse of alternative Britain since the early 20th century and has seen wave after wave of settlers arrive there each seeking their personal Holy Grail. This vortex of the strange was well known to John Michel and, with the mysto-steam of the 60s beginning to rise, he decided to experience the 'Glastonbury effect' for himself.

"It was, I think, in 1966 that I first went to Glastonbury, in the company of Harry Fainlight ... We had no very definite reason for going there, but it had something to do with strange lights in the sky, new music, and our conviction that the world was about to flip over on its axis so that heresy would become orthodoxy and an entirely new world-order would shortly be revealed." Michel continues, "At that time I was writing the first of my published books, *The Flying Saucer Vision*. It followed up the idea, first put forward by C.J. Jung in his 1959 book on flying saucers, that the strange lights and other phenomena of the post-War period were

portents of a radical change in human consciousness coinciding with the dawn of the Aquarian Age. A theme in my book was the connection between 'unidentified flying objects' and ancient sites, as evidenced both in folklore and in contemporary experience. UFOs were constantly being sighted over St Michael's tower on Glastonbury Tor."

And there, in that statement Michel encapsulated an entirely new way of looking at flying saucers and their meaning. But, as the old saying goes, 'if you can remember the 60s you weren't there', and Michel's version of how he came to be entangled in flying saucers and the Matter of Britain is contested by author and playwright Neil Oram, who remembers things very differently.

"I don't know if it's important, but it was I who turned John Michel on to the UFO phenomena in 1964. I was renting a caff off him in Islington and he told me he was thinking of going off to Mongolia. I suggested he read Donald Keyhoe and Al Bender before he went off to Mongolia. I then told him my theory that I thought Stonehenge and such places were TRANSFORMING STATIONS. Six months later ... beginning of 1965 ... John came to visit me at 32 Barons Court Road, and told me of his recent adventures inside megalithic sites. I was very impressed by what he'd been doing. He'd definitely picked up the baton. He'd gone a step further on than me by taking acid on his own AT NIGHT inside these ancient centres. He was now as convinced as I was that there was a mysterious connection between moving LIGHTS and ancient gathering places."

If Michel were the catalyst and helmsman for the hippies' interests in flying saucers then the motive power was provided by drug LSD, which had hit London during 1965. LSD, or acid as it soon became known, was quickly taken up by the counter-cultural mystic vanguard and suddenly everything was not only possible, it was likely!

Art gallery owner and Underground luminary Barry Miles summed up the effect of LSD on the hippies as being, "... from the mid-sixties onwards you have what would have to be called a sort of LSD consciousness permeates the whole of the counter-

culture side of British society. And you get it in the songs of the Pink Floyd ..., all these bands incorporate LSD inspired imagery, and that of course was not the normal imagery of love songs and picking up girls, it was much more to do with a rather sort of specifically British form of psychedelia which involved dancing gnomes and flying saucers". Neil Oram concurred, qualifying Miles' viewpoint with, "It wasn't just a question of taking acid, but of taking acid IN THE RIGHT CONTEXT...THE RIGHT CONDITIONS."

The combination of potent psychedelics with the Matter of Britain and a new generation of seekers re-vivified Glastonbury as a spiritual centre. In addition to King Arthur, the terrestrial zodiacs and other landscape legends, flying saucers were now woven into the tapestry of belief. Issue one of the Underground magazine, *Albion*, edited by Michel gives the visual clues; dragons and UFOs appear in the skies over Glastonbury Tor, whilst swords, serpents and geomantic imagery is visible in the Earth. A new meaning for flying saucers was being forged and to the English Underground this blend of saucers, sacred sites and mythology was a damned sight more interesting than the nuts-and-bolts, sci-fi derived vision of the current UFO orthodoxy.

Barry Miles wasn't particularly interested in flying saucers but he realised the power that UFO symbolism held for the hippies, "With the Indica Bookshop, which I ran, our headed notepaper in fact had an engraving from a Mayan carving, which if you look at it in one way looks like an alien flying a flying saucer."

Miles was also aware of the attraction Glastonbury held for those in the counter culture, "The King's Road led straight to Glastonbury in those days ... The people we knew ... led double lives, experimenting with acid, spending entire evenings discussing flying saucers, ley lines and the court of King Arthur. Other people waited patiently at Arthur's Tor for flying saucers to land." They did, and as word got round that Glastonbury was the new 'window area' for UFO sightings more and more hippies made it a place of pilgrimage.

John Michel again:



"UFOs were constantly being sighted over St Michael's tower on Glastonbury Tor. Mark Palmer, Maldwyn Thomas and their group were then travelling with horses and carts on pilgrimages across England. They often camped near the Tor, and while I was with them we used to watch the nightly manoeuvrings of lights in the sky. Jung's prophecy of aerial portents being followed by a change in consciousness was evidently being fulfilled."

Craig Sams, who set up England's first macrobiotic restaurant, was also a Glastonbury enthusiast: "I didn't see a flying saucer till October 1967 when I went to Glastonbury. One day I got a 'phone call from Mark Palmer saying that it would be a good idea to come down, that there was a lot of UFO activity, that John Michel, who had just written *The Flying Saucer Vision*, was camping down there, and Michael Rainey. So here we are in the field and up come the UFOs. We weren't tripping, I'd given up acid. I was completely normal, maybe I'd had a cup of tea about half an hour before ... Mark Palmer saw them – they were definitely there. They were in the classic cigar-shaped mother-ship form. Little lights emanating from them. Then at one point you saw these other lights coming up towards them and the smaller lights just shot into the cigar-shaped mother-ship, which then just disappeared at high speed. The other lights had been RAF jets. It was obvious that the RAF had scrambled some jets."

It would be easy to dismiss the Underground's fascination with saucers if it weren't for the fact that 1967 was a huge 'flap' year for UFO sightings in the UK. This wasn't just a 'hippie thing', it was even happening to policemen, who chased them for hours in their patrol cars. The M.O.D. were so inundated by UFO reports they radically changed their UFO policy and set up a team of investigators to interview civilian UFO witnesses, the first time this had been done.

As flying saucers became further embedded in popular culture rock musicians were becoming interested in them as a means of expressing the psychedelic experience. The link between drugs, music and flying saucers was consolidated by Barry Miles

and Joe Boyd when they named one of the first hippie clubs, on Tottenham Court Road, 'UFO'. Although 'Unidentified Flying Object' was only one of its meanings, advertisements in *International Times* showed a flying saucer hovering over the head of a dancing hippie, with the phrase 'night tripper'. Music histories of the psychedelic era use eastern influences, such as sitars and raga-like instrumentals, along with the drug references as the indicator of how 'far out' the music was. But there was also an aspect of psychedelia steeped in saucers and space.

Pink Floyd's first album *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* included the atmospheric paean to deep space, *Astronomy Domini*, possibly the first song to use outer space as a metaphor for inner space. By their second album Pink Floyd had further absorbed saucer culture, entitling it *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, mixing ideas of flying saucers, the secrets found inside the mind, with perhaps a nod toward a batch of potent LSD called flying saucers. The sleeve artwork left fans in no doubt that space, inner or outer, was the place; swirling universes and spinning discs mixed with signs of the zodiac, and the keynote song, *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*, became the backdrop for many psychedelic journeys toward dawn.

The Rolling Stones, possibly the least spiritual band of the generation, also took an interest in saucers. John Michel accompanied the Stones on a saucer spotting mission to Stonehenge, whilst singer Marianne Faithfull recalls the Stones' ill-starred rhythm guitarist Brian Jones taking a great interest in Michel's ideas on the subject; "Like a lot of people at the time, myself included, he was convinced there was a mystic link between druidic monuments and flying saucers. Extraterrestrials were going to read these signs from their spaceship windows and get the message. It was the local credo: Glastonbury, ley lines and intelligent life in outer space..." Similarly, the Stones' Keith Richards was more than curious about saucers, "I've seen a few, but nothing any of the ministries would believe," he told a *Melody Maker* journalist. "I believe they exist – plenty of people have seen them. They are tied up with a lot of things, like the dawn

of man, for example. It's not just a matter of people spotting a flying saucer. I'm not an expert. I'm still trying to understand what's going on."

Throughout his career David Bowie has flirted with the idea of 'the alien', often mentioning extraterrestrials in songs such as *Starman*, and creating the Ziggy Stardust persona. In the late 1960s, before he was catapulted to fame with the single *Space Oddity* (based on Kubrick's film *2001-a Space Odyssey*) he claimed to have been closely involved with flying saucer research. In 1975 he revealed to *Creem* magazine, "I used to work for two guys who put out a UFO magazine in England about six years ago. And I made sightings six, seven times a night for about a year, when I was in the observatory. We had regular cruises that came over. We knew the '6.15' was coming in and would meet up with another one. And they would be stationary for about half an hour, and then after verifying what they'd been doing that day, they'd shoot off." The fact that the '6.15' was so regular over south London should have given Bowie a hint that it may have been an airplane rather than a UFO! Bowie's active interest in UFO research dwindled as his fame as a performer grew, but it can't have been helped by this event, recounted in a recent issue of *The Word*: "An early attempt, while living in Beckenham, to attract extra-terrestrials involved standing on his roof at dusk pointing a coat hanger into the skies. He gave up, dejectedly, when a passer-by enquired, 'Do you get BBC2?'"

The Beatles, too, flirted with saucer lore. John Lennon's interest is well known and his UFO sighting is recorded in the song *Nobody Told Me*. But the genesis of this interest lay in the haze of the late 1960s. At that time the Beatles' Apple entourage included a mysterious character called Magic Alex. He enthralled the fab four with stories of electronic wizardry and he planned to build a Beatles flying saucer. But Paul McCartney drew the line there, saying, "John and George might have agreed to donate the engines from their cars to help build this bloody flying saucer. But I certainly didn't go that far."

If music was one way of spreading the Flying Saucer message through the English Under-

The King's Road  
led straight to  
Glastonbury in those  
days; the people we  
knew led double  
lives, experimenting  
with acid, spending  
entire evenings  
discussing flying  
saucers, ley lines  
and the court of  
King Arthur. Other  
people waited  
patiently at Arthur's  
Tor for flying  
saucers to land



ground then poster art was another, equally valid, method. Artists created lavish posters for even the most small scale event, incorporating the myths, signs and symbols of the era with visual images of the music and musicians. Barry Miles recalled, "The symbol of the flying saucer on the posters of Michael English and Nigel Weymouth and the references in all of the songs wasn't just used as a graphic symbol or a convenient lyrical device. People did feel that flying saucers were shorthand for a wider, deeper understanding, a sort of god figure I suppose or a sense of an external spiritual deity of some sort. There was one clothes shop called Hung On You that Michael Rainey had and, he very much believed in fly-

was: "Do you believe in flying saucers? Most people with even a slightly open mind accept their existence, if only because so many reliable people have seen them... The book itself doesn't turn you on. You must read the book and turn yourself on... If you are just beginning to be interested in saucers then read his book. If you are already convinced and want a beautiful rave with your mind, read other further out authors." Quite!

Oz was less keen, Editor Richard Neville being more interested in provoking the establishment through explorations of radical politics or sex than through modern myths. But when Neville took his eye off the ball for issue nine, leaving the work to poster

artist Martin Sharp and designer John Goodchild, he was shocked at the result, "To my embarrassment it was devoted to flying saucers". Enraged, he asked Sharp, "How can you indulge your intergalactic delusions, when Asia is a bloodbath?" Sharp's reply typified the zeitgeist, "There are far more things in heaven and earth, Richard, than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

The cover of *Flying Saucer Oz*, as it became known, featured a large flying disc, taken from a collage by the surrealist artist Max Ernst, with six coloured pages featuring a variety of quotes about the saucer phenomenon from

'hip' people ranging from Charles Fort to Mick Jagger.

Michel's influence on the hippie movement coupled with his erudition was such that the 'establishment' couldn't ignore him. Following the screening of *UFOs and the People who See Them* on BBC1 on 9th May 1968, *The Listener* devoted most of that week's issue to a discussion of flying saucers. John Michel was asked to contribute an essay which, simply entitled 'Flying Saucers', clearly laid out the hippie philosophy in relation to aerial phenomena. This was a blend of sightings of inexplicable lights in

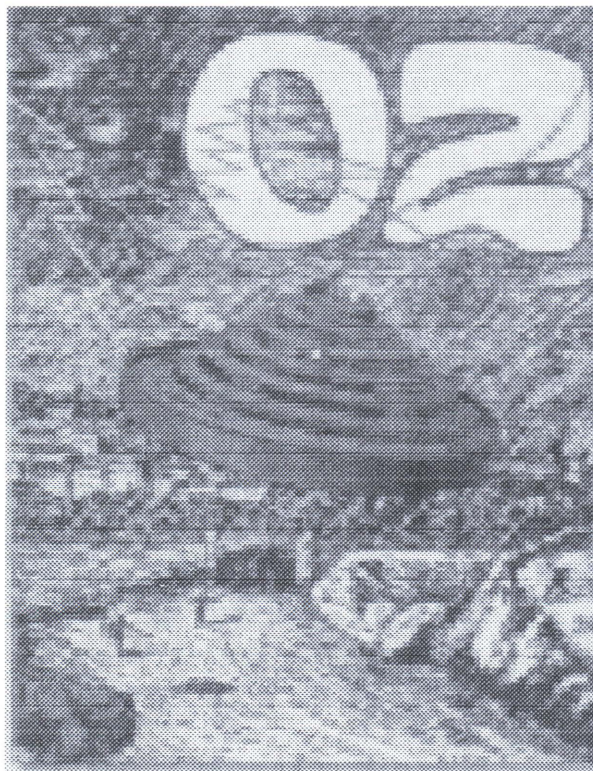
the sky, mixed with snippets of folklore, Glastonbury ley and dragon lines and other ephemera from the Underground's dream world.

*Listener* editor Karl Miller contributed a critical piece, 'Midsummer Nights' Dreams', analysing the 'UFO cult' and Michel's place within it: "He is less a hippy, perhaps, than a hippy's counsellor, one of their junior Merlins." Recognising Michel's influence, but keenly aware of his shortcomings, Miller wrote, "Michel behaves like a visionary, though his language doesn't always avoid the current jargon of the pads and barricades. He likes to talk about how the light from the midsummer sunrise shot across the land, travelling a line from holy place to holy place, starting the crops, bathing the feasts and fairs that saluted its passage. I would say that ... his book is relatively weak, busying itself with sundry mysteries like that of the Marie Celeste and converting them to extra-terrestrial proofs." 'Straight' society was intrigued by the hippie take on flying saucers but then, as now, saw no real evidence they could take seriously.

Just as 'straight' society disassociated itself from the hippies, mainstream UFO enthusiasts kept their distance too, the nuts-and-bolts saucer buffs considering the hippies to be just a bunch of drug takers with strange views. The irony that 'straight' society viewed the nuts-and-bolts crowd as being equally strange was completely lost on them!

But some influential individuals from the orthodoxy saw the hippies were receptive to new ideas, and that mercurial aristocrat of flying saucer culture, Desmond Leslie, decided to organise the UK's first flying saucer convention for them. The conference, held during the summer of 1968 on Lusty Beg Island on Lower Lough Erne in County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, near the Leslie family seat of Castle Leslie, was jointly organised by Desmond Leslie and Camilla, Countess of Erne. Camilla was a wealthy socialite with an interest in flying saucers who frequented the edges of the English Underground. Johan Quajar remembers meeting Camilla in 1966 when he was recruiting for the recently formed Contact UK organization and she introduced him to a world where he attended,

"To my embarrassment it was devoted to flying saucers. How can you indulge your intergalactic delusions, when Asia is a bloodbath?"



ing saucers and there was a lot of flying saucer imagery all over the shop."

As saucers permeated the hippy subculture they began to appear more frequently in the underground press. *International Times* featured many articles and book reviews concerning saucers, engaging John Michel as their 'UFO correspondent'. In the June 16th 1967 issue I.T. reviewed *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, the first UFO book by French scientist and influential ufologist Jacques Vallee. The reviewer, Greg Sams used the argot of the period to express what a significant book it



"parties at which such well-known people as Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithful were present."

It was at these hip society shindigs where the latest trends in music and far out ideas were discussed. Barry Miles remembers many such psychedelic soirees: "The people we knew ... led double lives, experimenting with acid, spending entire evenings discussing flying saucers, ley lines and the court of King Arthur.", with "Michael Rainey in Sherwood green, grinning as always, stoned, talking about UFOs".

Now in with the in-crowd Quajar was contacted by, "... a would-be song-writer who needed a studio to record a UFO song which should have been ready in time for the UFO Fly In, on an island in Lough Erne. The song-writer and musician introduced me to the Beatles, at their office in Marylebone and I shook hands with them. The song writer was given quite costly studio time, in a Soho establishment, courtesy of Apple, the Beatles' record company. The record was duly cut and it had a nice tune to it, but the talent was not great enough for the single to be released and it disappeared without trace." It's unclear exactly who wrote this song but it is almost certain to have been one Chas Hodges, a session musician in the 1960s who eventually became half of the 'mockney' pop group Chas & Dave!

The Lusty Beg event was small, with attendance estimated at between 60 and 100 people. Small it may have been but many of those who did attend were movers and shakers from the English Underground.

Lusty Beg alumni included Nicholas Saunders, editor of *Alternative London* and founder of the Neal's Yard shopping complex in Covent Garden. Saunders' friend Gini Wade remembers, "Nick was always up for an adventure, particularly if it involved something unusual. In 1968 we went to a flying saucer conference ..." Saunders himself recalled, "I was fascinated by what John Michel was saying about UFOs and ley-lines and so on, but felt pretty guarded about it too. I did go to a Flying Saucer conference on an island in the middle of a lake in the northwest of Ireland. There were all these people plodding about in the rain and the mud and there were very serious talks

by people who either said that flying saucers had visited, that they'd been on flights themselves or that they'd seen them."

One of the aims of the convention was to attract a flying saucer to display itself to the assembled crowd. Unsurprisingly this failed to take place, but the faithful took heart from the fact that a 'strange red light' had been seen coming to rest in a nearby field. Gini Wade again: "... most of us congratulated ourselves on having lured the aliens successfully, even if they had landed in the wrong spot."

Another key member of the English Underground, Neil Oram, was also there. Oram had morphed from beatnik wanderer to hippy philosopher, later writing his semi-fictional memoirs as *The Warp* trilogy of books. In *Lemmings On the Edge*, Oram describes the scene as they arrived at the shores of Lough Erne, "At the water's edge we were met by Michael Roner, who took us across the choppy lake in a battered rowing boat which was equipped with a noisy, erratic outboard motor. Apart from the big white house on the lawn, the rest of the island was overgrown, without a trace of permanent habitation. Although now, there were camp fires and tents scattered all over the wooded hills, which rose quite steeply from the beach."

Desmond Leslie was responsible for organizing the conference lectures, held each evening in a large marquee. Scant information now exists as to exactly who gave spoke, but Neil Oram remarks that they consisted of "rather dull pronouncements of what lay in store for the human race". According to Oram, "It wasn't until the fourth night that we were given some real information, by an ex-Australian Air Force radar expert." This impressed Oram, "It made my hair stand on end when we learnt that he'd picked up unidentified craft, whose estimated diameter was in the region of three hundred miles! MILES! Traveling in excess of one hundred THOUSAND miles an hour!"

On the last night of the 'fly-in' Desmond Leslie introduced a young Irishman called Gerald to the audience. Gerald claimed to have had what would now be termed an abduction experience. He related a story of how,

walking home from a dance across an isolated area of moorland, he saw three coloured lights descending on him, after which he awoke on a bed in a circular, red, room which hummed. He was ordered to strip and a female humanoid figure seduced him. Afterwards she told



That mercurial aristocrat of flying saucer culture Desmond Leslie decided to organise the UK's first flying saucer convention, near his family seat of Castle Leslie in Northern Ireland

him, "All you earth people are strange". The next thing he knew he was back on the moorland road with the three coloured lights receding in the sky above him.

This story, with its obvious echoes of the well publicized Villas Boas case, was too much for some of the assembled hippies and vigorous arguments broke out. Even John Michel was dubious, questioning Gerald as to how he could be sure he was in a spaceship. As the arguments raged, Gerald slipped away and Desmond Leslie was left to calm the crowd. Gini Wade recalled the abductee being, "invited back to London where he was feted in Notting Hill, but he turned out to be a fraud and was spat out again."

Another well known face on the London scene, Dave Tomlin, attended the Lusty Beg conference. Tomlin had been a member of famous underground experimental bands including Sun Trolley and the Third Ear Band. He remembers, "... people camped in the woods who went in the evenings or afternoons for lectures or talks." Tomlin believed the hippies adopted flying saucers as

David Bowie's early attempt to attract extra-terrestrials involved standing on his roof at dusk pointing a coat hanger into the skies. He gave up, dejectedly, when a passer-by enquired, 'Do you get BBC2?'



**"There were all these people plodding about in the rain and the mud and there were very serious talks by people who either said that flying saucers had visited, that they'd been on flights themselves or that they'd seen them."**

"one of their credos", certain the spacemen were going to come because "one way or another this would be the only way to save the planet, because it was quite obvious what was going on."

But Johan Quanjar's experience of the event was not as positive. He notes that while, "Dozens of people had descended on the island for fun, jollity and invocation of higher energies. By the end of the week the entire hippy UFO community had gone native. They had formed separate tribes with some not speaking to others."

For Desmond Leslie however, the Lusty Beg Fly-In had been an enormous success and on his return to Castle Leslie he penned a flowery account of the event which amplified the growing connections between saucers and the mythology of Britain.

"So we are back, drenched with spray and sun from that magical island on Lough Erne where our Fly-In eventually took place, an island which saw the arrival of the Tuatha de Danaan, the space people who came to Ireland thousands of years ago, and island in the far West, hardly changed since their silvery chariots rose in the far western skies and became invisible. But their presence is still there: all around us were fairy rings, stone circles, ceremonial causeways and a lost timelessness, uncontaminated by later civilisations ... some of us went to White Island ... others went to the stone circles of Boa Island and made mental contact with the Space Brothers. On Friday at six o'clock by the sun we had our 'think in' and many managed to make mental contact and exchange feelings of brotherly love with the elder Ones..."

This event was as close as the hippie subculture ever got in organizing its interest in flying saucers, and they were rapidly losing that interest. Too many other fantastic possibilities vied for their attention, and when you've explored inner space, outer space could seem positively tedious. Essentially those among the English Underground who took an avid interest in flying saucers did so, not out of certain belief, but from a desire to explore possibilities. When the flying saucer experience didn't deliver the goods or, as the hippies saw on Lusty Beg, it descended into conflict and argu-



ment, they didn't want to know.

Poet and author Barry Gifford, whose novel *Wild at Heart* was used by David Lynch as the basis for the film, sojourned as a hippy in late 1960s London. In *The Duke of Earls Court* Gifford writes of his interest in Flying Saucers and refers to an incident when a friend, Ace, invited the editor of *Flying Saucer Review* to dinner. The clash of cultures was inevitable: "It was obvious upon his entrance that the editor, an ordinary-looking, balding, middle-aged man in a dark gray three-piece suit, was visibly shaken by the den of freaks to which he had unwittingly lent his presence. He had no idea, he said, attempting to smile, that the dinner was to be such an event.

"After answering a few desultory questions about saucers it was clear that the editor wanted to be anywhere else but with those people. The food was macrobiotic and when he enquired what was in the meal was told, 'Brown rice, kasha, bulgur, soy, miso. The food of the people. It makes you high'. Mention of the word 'high' caused the editor to drop his fork, obviously afraid that the meal had been spiked with drugs of some form. He left soon afterwards, pleading a prior engagement."

Flying Saucers continued to be courted by the English Underground in the dying embers of the 60s, but by 1970 the hippie movement had become subsumed into the broader spectrum of youth culture and was no longer fresh. You could buy kaftans in Marks and Spencers, and like all youth movements, it had been diluted and re-packaged by commercial interests, being sold rather than invented. Those who had been heavily involved in saucerdom moved swiftly on. For everyone

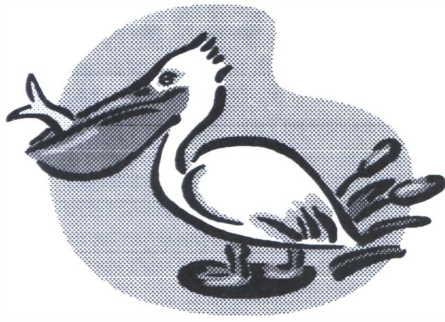
Barry Gifford (above) witnessed the clash of cultures between ufology and hippiedom: "an ordinary-looking, balding, middle aged man in a dark grey three-piece suit, was visibly shaken by the den of freaks to which he had unwittingly lent his presence"

else the subject of UFOs was now just another hip belief to be 'into', the publishing floodgates opened and books on earth mysteries, witchcraft, astrology, occultism and mysticism offered other ways of thinking and being.

Were it not for the hippies' interest in flying saucers, nurtured by John Michel, the interest in Earth Mysteries, folklore and ancient sacred sites we are experiencing in the 21st century would not have taken place. This brief burst of drug fuelled exploration cross pollinated many fortan subjects, the results of which we are still seeing now. Where mainstream ufology was mired in the yes/no argument about the physical reality of UFOs, the hippies treated the subject as just one in a long line of possibly useful ideas. This dichotomy of attitude between the hippie and the straight view of saucers was aptly summed up in an exchange between Barry Gifford and his friend, after the *FSR* editor had fled their dinner party. Referring to the editor's 'stuffy' attitude Ace pointed out to Gifford: "But it's ok man, it really is, he's a dedicated cat. I mean he's never seen one, but he really believes in them flying saucers."

"So do you," Gifford said. Ace nodded. "Sure, man, sure I do. The difference between him and me is that I'm not so bloody serious about it."





# THE PELICAN WRITES...

El pelícano es fuerte en sus apreciaciones pero muy razonable

The Pelican is amused by those ufologists who express frustration and annoyance at the fact that mainstream science refuses to take them seriously. Indeed, even those who pride themselves on being "Serious Ufologists" find it difficult to get their investigation results and ideas discussed in scientifically respectable circles.

Scientific organisations hold scientific conferences, and there is no room for fantasy and pseudoscience on the official agendas, though no doubt there are often fringe meetings at which cranky ideas can be expressed. UFO conferences are quite different, though among Serious Ufologists it is considered bad form to keep harping on this fact, which is why The Pelican intends to do just that.

Connoisseurs of ufological craziness who tour the conferences will always find plenty to delight them. Some real gems of idiocy and fantasy are on offer at the 14th International UFO Congress (Laughlin, Nevada, 6-12 March 2005). Dr Thomas Van Flandern will offer "proof" that faster-than-light travel is possible, "solid evidence that planets explode", and evidence of intelligent activity predating modern humans found on Mars. The writer of the conference programme candidly admits, however: "You will find it hard to believe the evidence presented tonight!"

Then there's the good old-fashioned contactee stuff. Wendelle Stevens will be telling the story of Bob Renaud, who was contacted by radio by people from the planet Korendor. This led to meetings with them and even "going on trips with them, in their craft, for months and years". Charles Hall will present his "truly groundbreaking account of his actual experiences with a very tall, white race of extraterrestrials in

the Nevada desert". The Pelican admits to having a soft spot for contactees, as any attempt at a serious discussion of them and their stories winds up the Serious Ufologists. Apparently, one of the iron rules of American Serious Ufology is: Contactees bad - abductees good.

For abduction enthusiasts, Budd Hopkins and David Jacobs will be doing a double act in which they will reveal their findings on "transgenic beings", who "apparently share alien paranormal abilities but who are also able to operate on a regular basis in our daily life ... outwardly living as normal people". Hopkins and Jacobs are greatly admired by many who think of themselves as Serious Ufologists, although, to judge from their writings, both of them are as mad as hatters. Both of them also have fawning acolytes who vigorously defend them against accusations of using dodgy investigation techniques, such as asking witnesses leading questions.

For those obsessed with the notion of a world-wide UFO "cover-up" there is the 2nd Annual Exopolitics Expo (X-Conference). This is scheduled for 22-24 April 2005, Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg. It is "part of the ongoing activist movement seeking to end the truth embargo, Topics in 2005 will include: impact of the film industry, the destruction of NICAP, MKULTRA, underground bases, the role of science in the exopolitics of disclosure, ET studies during the Carter administration, and much more." At this point The Pelican feels he should assure any readers new to ufology that he is not making this up.

It's true, you will probably agree, that some ufologists are potty. But aren't some of them -

the Really Serious Ufologists - sound people with long practical experience and/or impressive scientific qualifications? Surely mainstream science ought to be taking them seriously?

The problem with such people is that anyone who scrutinises their writings is likely to find some disturbing features. Everything is rigorously scientific until they come to something that clashes with what they evidently want to believe. The Pelican invites you to look briefly at a few examples.

In late 2003 there was an at times heated argument on the UFO UpDates mailing list, about the notorious Trindade UFO photographs. Some ufologists believe them to be genuine, and others believe them to have been faked. Brad Sparks, who is noted for his knowledge of technical matters, argued that they were genuine. In one posting he made the astonishing assertion: "I have measured what appears to be rapid rotational motion at the extreme edges of the object, amounting to something on the order of 400 to 800 degs/sec around a central axis, and the angular velocity of rotation changes from photo to photo (hence my 400 to 800 degs/sec figures)." (1)

Naturally, some correspondents wanted details of the amazing photographic analysis technique which would enable one to obtain such detailed information from small images on a set of fuzzy prints (the negatives not being available). Some sceptics (i.e. realists) reading this will not be surprised to hear that requests for details of this technique were left unanswered.

Almost equally odd was the attitude of veteran Really Serious Ufologist Richard Hall, who regards himself as being impeccably logical and scientific in his ap-

proach to UFO research. Hall objected to the controversy on the Trindade case on the grounds that it had already been thoroughly investigated and found to be a "true" UFO. The fact that numerous inconsistencies and examples of sloppy investigative procedures emerged during the debate did not alter his opinion.

Even odder is a story of a UFO incident which Hall has on his web site. This concerns an incident which allegedly occurred at McGuire Air Force Base on 18 January 1978. (2) Hall's informant told him that UFOs were seen over the base that night, and that one of them came down low and a strange being, which had apparently emerged from the UFO, had suddenly appeared in front of a military police patrol vehicle, whose driver panicked and shot the creature, which was eventually found dead and carted off to - no prizes for guessing! - Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Nothing wrong with recording such stories, you might say, but Hall states unequivocally: "At this point there is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that the report is authentic ... This is despite the fact that the base commander and other senior officers who were there at the time have told investigators that no such incident had occurred, and if it had they would of course have known about it.

If you can't trust the Really Serious Ufologists to talk sense about their subject, then who can you trust?

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# A Man Who Would be King

Gareth J. Medway

The *Fortean Times* recently (September 2004) noted the death of Pierre Plantard, also known as Pierre Plantard de Saint-Clair, Count of Saint-Clair and Count of Rhédae, one time Grand Master of the Priory of Sion, who had passed on in 2000. The *FT* remarked that he was “either an incredibly important man or a huge dreamer and practical joker”. Also “The facts about his life are so muddled (probably deliberately) that no one can say with any certainty who or what he was”, but here is a brief attempt to describe his life and influence.

Pierre Plantard was born on 18 March 1920. The next thing we know is that in September 1942, under the name Pierre de France, he began to edit a free monthly magazine named *Vaincre*. This was stated to be the organ of the ‘Alpha Galates’, a neo-chivalric order which consisted of a

Légion and a Phalange. The reader would have had difficulty in discovering exactly what the purpose of the order was, as its intentions were set out at best vaguely, and often contradictorily. The first issue spoke of creating “an agreement among the people, united in a true socialism, banishing forever the quarrels created by the capitalist interest”, yet one contributor was Professor Louis Le Fur, a prominent right winger. Much of the contents dealt with Atlantis, Celtic wisdom, and other esoteric subjects having no obvious bearing on chivalry or practical politics. Decades later, Plantard would declare that it had been a resis-

tance publication, for those capable of reading between the lines.

On 19 November 1942 *Au pilori*, a pro-Nazi magazine, published an attack on Plantard, Alpha Galates and *Vaincre*, without making specific allegations. The next issue of *Vaincre*, published on the 21st, was entirely devoted to replying to the *Au pilori* attack. In January of the following year, Louis Le Fur praised Alpha Galates’s new Grand Master, Pierre de France-Plantard.

Thus, at the age of twenty-two, Plantard seemed to be making a name for himself. He was editing a fairly high quality publication, which given the war-time shortage of paper indicates that he had money behind him. His contributors included Louis Le Fur, who, though as a supporter of the Vichy regime was discredited after the war, was a name to conjure with during the occupation. He was the Grand Master of the Alpha Galates, whatever exactly that was, and had roused the ire of the pro-Nazis.

Yet contradictions were already apparent. Le Fur said that he had been a member of Alpha Galates for eight years, i.e. since about 1934. But *Vaincre* stated that Alpha Galates had only been registered in the *Journal Officiel* - in which all new societies in France must declare themselves - on 27 December 1937. In fact, no such entry can be found, and the Order had never been heard of by the French Ministry of Defence and the Prefecture of Police. But the Grand Master himself was known to the police, however,





who wrote in a 1941 report: "Plantard, who boasts of having links with numerous politicians, seems to be one of those dotty, pretentious young men who run more or less fictitious groups in an effort to look important and who are taking advantage of the present trend towards taking a greater interest in young people in order to attract the Government's attention."

From what is known of Plantard's later career, it is virtually certain that he used to pen attacks upon himself as a form of publicity. We may suspect then that he was behind the *Au pilori* article, hence perhaps the fact that he was able to prepare a complete issue in response in only two days. It is also possible that Professor Le

maintaining there for several years, But for this period we are largely dependent on his own word, which is of little value. He may have come into contact with, indeed joined, the Grande Loge Alpina, the central authority for Swiss Freemasonry, as he would later illicitly use their imprint on some of his own publications. He may also have met Leo Schidlöf, an Austrian dealer in miniatures then living in Geneva and said to have been a dignitary of this lodge, whose name he would likewise associate with some of these writings.

In the 1950s France was highly unstable politically - a British radio comedy series of the time contained the line "I've made arrangements with one of the French

"maintains close contact with a network of other housing associations". Probably these references were meant to be understood to refer to the Committees for Public Safety. There was also an article on astrology which introduces a thirteen sign zodiac, the extra sign being Opiuchus, placed between Scorpio and Sagittarius. This special zodiac would become almost a trade mark of Plantard-inspired publications. Most importantly, it contained minutes of meetings held to draw up the statutes of what would become the Priory of Sion, though that name was not mentioned.

On 25 June 1956 the Priory declared itself to the Sub-Prefecture of Saint-Julien-en-Genevois. Its head office was at Sous-Cassan, where *Circuit* was published. This is not far from Switzerland and Lake Léman, where Plantard had supposedly lived since 1947. The order was supposed to practise 'Catholic chivalry', but its objectives, as usual, were obscure. Like Alpha Galates it had a 'Légion' and a 'Phalange'. There was to be a hierarchy of nine grades, one member at the highest 'Nautonier' level, three in the next down, nine in the next, and so on, each level down having three times the number of that above, so that there would be  $9841 (1 + 3 + 9 + 27 + 81 + 243 + 729 + 2187 + 6561)$  members in all. There is no reason to think that, in fact, the membership exceeded a handful, indeed no absolute evidence that it was ever more than one. The Secretary-General was Pierre Plantard; other members of the Council were said to be (though the names have been suspected to be false) Pierre Bonhomme, President, Jean Delaval, Vice-President, and Pierre Defagot, Treasurer. Nothing else is known of these men, except that Defagot's name appeared as the author of the aforementioned astrology article.

*Circuit* ceased publication that September. Our hero is next heard of two years later, when a communiqué from the Paris Central Committee of Public Safety to the newspaper *Le Monde*, dated 6 June, called for the people to back General de Gaulle for the Presidency. It was signed 'Captain Way', which the paper understood to be a pseudonym; later they identified him as M. Plantard. On 29 July it was

#### Bibliographical note:

I have not attempted to consult all of the primary sources, which would involve a prolonged visit to France. Most of them are conveniently summarised (though amidst much probably irrelevant material) in Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh & Henry Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, Cape, 1982, chapters 4 to 8; the same authors' *The Messianic Legacy*, 1986, chapters 17 to 23; and John M. Saul & Janice A. Glaholm, *Rennes-le-Château: A Bibliography*, Mercurius Press, 1985. Other books include, in chronological order:

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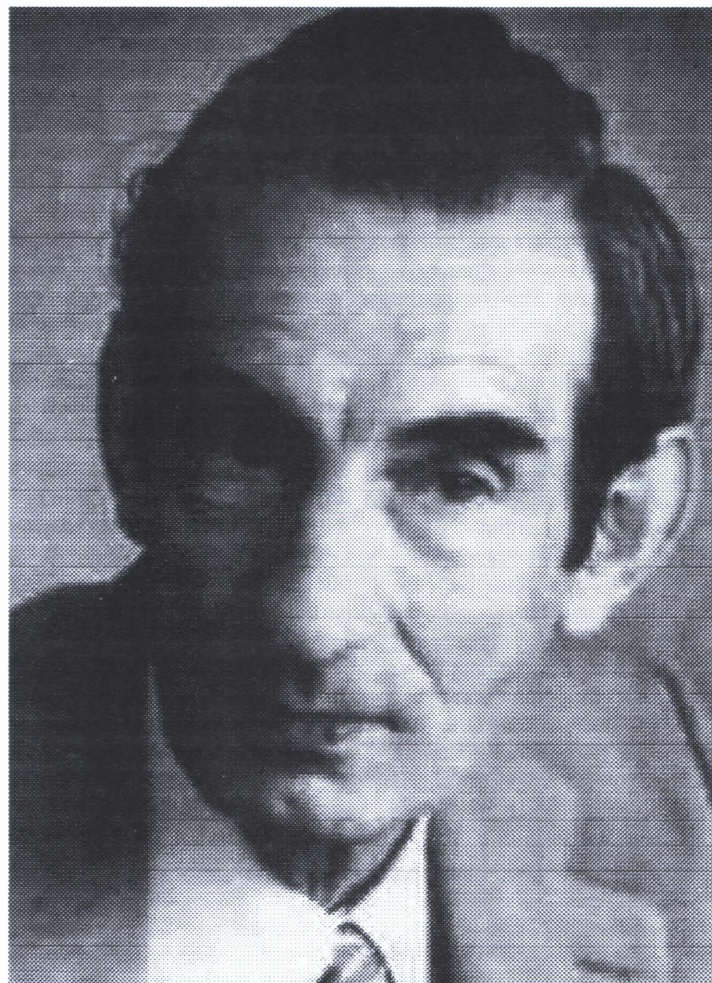
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Fur's name had been borrowed by *Vaincre* without his knowledge, and once again Plantard did similar things in later years.

In October 1943 Plantard was allegedly interned by the Gestapo in the prison of Fresnes, and tortured, but set free again in February 1944. He married Anne-Léa Hisler in Paris in 1946, and in 1947 apparently moved to near Lake Léman in Switzerland, re-

governments ..." This atmosphere engendered conspiracies, and there arose a network of clandestine 'Committees for Public Safety', with whom M. Plantard came to be involved. In May 1956 a magazine entitled *Circuit* began publication at Sous-Cassan, Annemasse, each issue introduced by Pierre Plantard. They ostensibly dealt with low-cost housing, saying that their housing association





Bérangère Saunière, the priest at the heart of the mystery of Rennes-le-Château.

announced that the Central Committee had been dissolved, and succeeded by something called simply the 'Movement', of which "Pierre Plantard is secretary and in charge of propaganda".

Meanwhile, *Circuit* had resumed publication, describing itself as the 'Cultural Periodical of the Federation of French Forces', and giving its address as 116 Rue Pierre Johet, Aulnay-sous-Bois, which in fact was false. Articles on subjects ranging from Atlantis to astrology were signed by both Plantard's wife Anne-Léa Hisler, and by Plantard himself. It continued monthly until at least December. There were repeated references to *Vaincre*, implying that it was still obtainable, Plantard having presumably been unable even to give away the whole print run.



Conventional history says that Dagobert II was the last king of the Merovingian dynasty, but Plantard claimed that Dagobert's son had survived and his bloodline could be traced down to the present day

In the 1960s Plantard and his wife began issuing a large number of books and pamphlets, using a variety of pseudonyms, such as 'Madeleine Blancasall' and 'Antoine l'Ermite'. Early examples included an essay on the Common Market, and one on a historical mystery, *Gisors and its secret*: some years earlier a number of enigmatic subterranean chambers had been discovered there. It has been observed that these tracts were never commercially distributed, and it is even suggested that the copies at the Bibliothèque Nationale may be the only ones in existence. From what I know of the habits of self-publishers, however, I would guess

that large numbers were sent gratis to people who might have been interested in their contents, though no doubt most ended up in waste paper baskets.

The scale of such an operation is obviously dependent upon how much money is available and here there are again contradictory claims. It has been said that Plantard owns large tracts of land in the vicinity of Rennes-le-Château, implying that he is of the 'gentry' class, with plenty of wealth to spare; yet he has also been described as a draughtsman for a stove-fitting firm, who had difficulty paying his rent. In both instances the source of information is unclear.

Anyway, it may have been one of these tracts that brought him into contact with Gérard de Sède, a writer who specialised in popular non-fiction. The first work of their collaboration, signed by de Sède but at least partly inspired by Plantard, with the somewhat enigmatic title *The Templars are among us*, 1962, dealt, again, with the mediaeval fortress of Gisors. They linked the chambers to esotericism - including the thirteen sign zodiac, enigmatically superimposed over a map of France - and hinted that there was more to all this than met the eye. Unlike Plantard's own writings, de Sède's were issued by major publishers.

The same year saw the appearance of the popular work *Treasures of the world*, by Robert Charroux (better known in Britain for his 'Ancient Astronaut' writings) which included a chapter on Bérangère Saunière, who from 1885 until his death in 1917 was the priest in the small village of Rennes-le-Château in the south of France. Originally poor, at some time in the 1890s he had suddenly acquired a fortune, which he proceeded to spend on building projects, public works and high living. Though the story is fascinating, Charroux made it clear that the essentially mundane explanation was that the priest had uncovered a hoard of mediaeval treasure, which had probably been concealed beneath the floor of the church. In France, treasure trove becomes by law the property of the government, but most finders

understandably prefer to sell it clandestinely rather than surrender it to the authorities. For this reason the nature of the hoard is uncertain, though people who knew him agreed that it included thirteenth century gold coins. The story first seems to have come to public attention in January 1956, when the paper *Dépêche du Midi* ran a series of articles about Saunière, based on interviews with Noël Corbu, who had bought the priest's old villa.

Pierre Plantard began visiting the area, where he was described, by a local historian, as "a strange person who, from the end of the 1950s, was often seen prowling about in these parts. This man lived in Paris. He had no connections and no known relatives in the area. He was a difficult fellow to place, drab, secretive, cunning, with the gift of the gab, but people who spoke to him said it was hard to follow what he said." It was also reported that he compiled files about the place, in which he would attribute remarks to respectable people which they had not made.

In the 1960s his publications turned their attention to the mystery. *A Merovingian Treasure at Rennes-le-Château*, by 'Antoine l'Ermite', published by 'Grande Loge Alpina' turns out to be merely an unacknowledged (and doubtless unauthorised) reprint of the chapter in Charroux's *Treasures of the world*. But elsewhere he also made startling new claims, such as that Saunière's find had included parchments bearing genealogies and biblical texts with encoded messages in them. He alleged that the village, though now small and remote, had been a large and important town up until about the thirteenth century, and, in particular, for a few years the home of Dagobert II, the exiled king of Austrasia, a territory whose boundaries cut through the borders of several modern countries, including part of north-east France. Dagobert later regained his throne, but was assassinated in 679, leaving, according to conventional history, no descendants, so that the Merovingian dynasty, as it was called, became extinct. The various pseudonyms for Pierre Plantard alleged that, in reality, Dagobert's son Sigisbert had survived, and his bloodline could be traced down to the present day. Once more the best distributed and



known production was that of de Sède, who termed it 'the accursed treasure', claiming that several people connected with it had died mysteriously, in the manner of those who entered Tutankhamen's tomb. He included illustrations of two of the alleged parchments, on one of which it was fairly easy to discover that taking the raised letters in order gave the sentence: A DAGOBERT II ET A SION EST CE TRESOR ET IL EST LA MORT, that is, 'This treasure belongs to Dagobert II and to Sion, and he is there dead', though the last phrase was ambiguous, and (more likely, given the 'accursed' theme of the book) meant, 'and it is death'.

The intent behind these claims gradually, over the years, became apparent: the last survivor of the Merovingian dynasty, whose return to the throne was anticipated, was Pierre Plantard, who on this basis expected to be proclaimed king, not only of France, but of a United States of Europe. Since it is exceedingly improbable that the proudly republican French would wish to restore the Merovingian or any other monarchy, one had to conclude either that Plantard was barking mad, or that there was a vast complex conspiracy at work. The authors of sensational books usually favour the latter theory.

Leo Schidlof, now resident in London, unwittingly got caught up in the affair. Though he had, according to his daughter, no interest in the Merovingian dynasty or Rennes-le-Château, in the 1960s he received numerous letters and telephone calls from individuals in both Europe and the United States who wished to discuss such things with him. My guess is that Plantard had brought Schidlof's name into his tracts to make it look as if a high-ranking Freemason was involved in his machinations. Schidlof died on 17 October 1966.

A few weeks later appeared a booklet by 'S. Roux', *The affair of Rennes-le-Château*. This began by reproducing a letter, signed Lionel Burrus, which had allegedly appeared in the *Catholic Weekly of Geneva* on 22 October. In fact, Burrus had been killed in a car accident in September; it is likely that his name was attached to a letter forged soon afterwards, in order to keep up the myth of the 'accursed treasure'. Anyway,



This symbol - a fleur de lys inside a circle - later appeared on the coat of arms of Pierre Plantard, above the motto 'Et in Arcadia Ego'

'Burrus' mentioned Schidlof's death, and said that he used the alias 'Henri Lobineau', the name attached to a *Genealogy of the Merovingian Kings* (supposedly 1956, but probably 1964). Despite his death, he said, Merovingian interests continued to be promoted: to prove this, somewhat bizarrely he cited advertisements for Antar Petrol, whose emblem, a man holding a lily and a circle, he alleged to show a Merovingian king holding the device of his dynasty.

Roux, in the pamphlet, began by attacking Burrus, but like him praised Schidlof, who he said was, to the horror of the Catholic Church, aiming for "a popular monarchy allied to the USSR [?!], and the triumph of Freemasonry - in short the disappearance of re-

ligious freedom." He went on to say that "... everyone knows that the publicity of Antar Petrol, with a Merovingian king holding a Lily and a Circle, is a popular appeal in favour of returning the Merovingians to power."

This symbol - a fleur de lys inside a circle - later appeared on the coat of arms of Pierre Plantard, above the motto 'Et in Arcadia Ego ...', along with the claim that the arms and motto had been "cited as such as early as 1210 by one Robert, Abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel". There is no verification of this, which is hardly surprising, since mottoes were not included in blazons of arms until after 1400. Moreover, while ordinaries and subordinaries took many forms, bends, chevrons, and so on, they were *never* circu-

lar. This coat of arms is clearly modern, and most likely copied direct from the logo of Antar Petrol. My friend Michael Bingas has pointed out that 'Antar' contains the middle letters of his name, which Plantard had no doubt noticed, and deduced that these advertisements secretly referred to himself.

Meanwhile Plantard, like many founders of secret societies, had got frustrated that it did not have an ancient lineage, and therefore, like so many others, decided to invent one. As seems to be obligatory, he gave it a history which, apart from being of necessity unprovable, was quite obviously false. He stated that the Priory of Sion had begun in 1099 as a group with the Knights Templars, from whom they broke away in 1188. He gave a list of Grand Masters which began with various obscure mediaeval knights, progressing to famous Renaissance men such as Leonardo da Vinci, and concluding with the modern cultural figures Victor Hugo, Claude Debussy and Jean Cocteau. Whilst it would be theoretically possible for a society always to appoint someone famous as their chief, an invariable feature of these posthumously devised lists is that some of them were supposedly made chief *before* they became well known, as, in this case, Robert Fludd in 1595, at which time he was a 21-year-old student, whose renowned encyclopaedic Hermetic treatises would not appear for another two decades. Even more absurdly, Edouard de Bar is said to have been made Grand Master in 1307, when he was only five!

This material, and much more like it, was deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris as *Dossiers Secrets d'Henri Lobineau*, "compiled by Phillippe Toscan du Plantier", not a book as such, but "a species of folder with stiff covers which contained a loose assemblage of ostensibly unrelated items - news clippings, letters pasted to backing-sheets, pamphlets, numerous genealogical trees and the odd printed page extracted from the body of some other work." Though Lobineau was again stated to have been Schidlof, it has been observed that: "Comparisons with the letterings in Pierre Plantard's publications, *Gisors et son secret ...* and the cover of *Tableaux comparatifs*

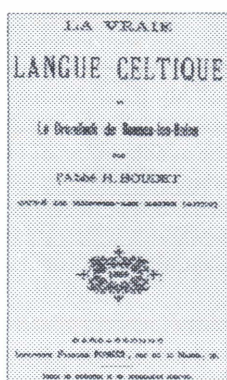
Plantard claimed that Saunière's find had included parchments bearing genealogies and biblical texts with coded messages in them

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IOVNVSCATTE-ATSCOVOMLENTAIVSCVJOMARTALERGOACBC  
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CSTERNVETEXTESJITICAP7IARTSHJVSPEPDCSXTPT7EADOMHESJ  
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IVTXVDAZQCARJORTJYVITKATCVBOMTADITTVRVS9TVAKWCC  
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NTNOMVPROTEPTESUM+ETANTVMOMJEDVILU22RVOMPUTDE  
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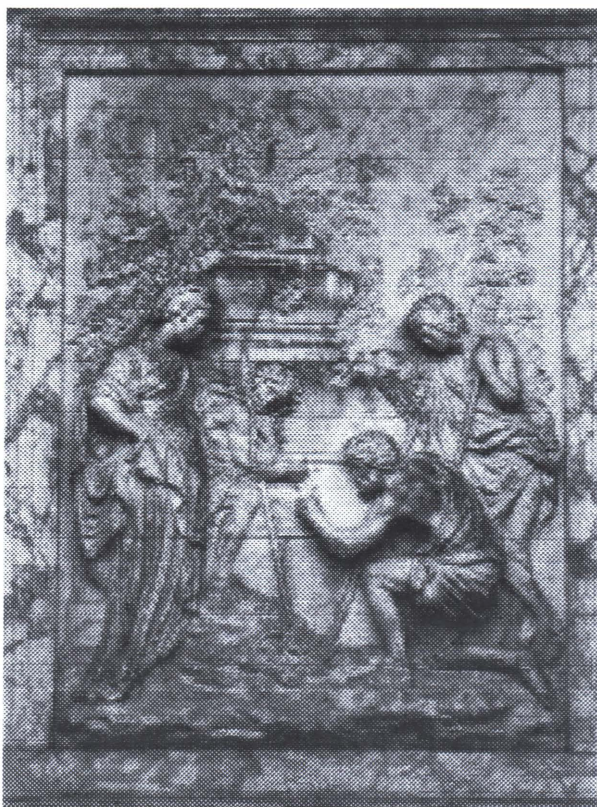
NO 7 IS

V. OMEDCL2.VVULNERUM+SPESVNA.PENITENTIVOM  
I.MAGDALANX.LACRYMAS+PECCATA.NOSTRA.diluas





La Vraie Langue Celtique is not quite so rare as one might expect. On returning to England, Lincoln learned that there was a copy in the reference section of Swiss Cottage Library



des charges sociales dans les pays du: "Marché Commune", suggest a common authorship withLOBineau's works."

The Priory had seemingly shrunk in membership, however, as there were now said to be only seven grades. The factor of three relationship remained, however, so that there would have been 1093 members in all. Later still, a new set of statutes was published, in which there were said to be only five grades, hence only 121 members.

More 'mysterious' deaths occurred early in 1967, when a small prose poem appeared entitled *Le Serpent Rouge - Notes sur Saint-Germain-des-Près et Saint-Sulpice de Paris*, Pontoise. The authors were given as Pierre Feugère, Louis Saint-Maxent and Gaston de Koker. All three men were (separately) found hanged on the 6-7 March. Since *Le Serpent Rouge* bore the date 17 January,

searcher determined that it had been done on the same typewriter as the *Dossiers Secrets*.

By the 1970s, the Priory was finally beginning to gain public attention. A BBC scriptwriter, Henry Lincoln, had purchased Gérard de Sède's book on Rennes-le-Château whilst on holiday, and was intrigued to discover the hidden message about Dagobert. He suggested the subject to a producer as suitable for a twenty-minute feature, and it was approved. (It may be worth noting that, though he had scripted more than one hundred television dramas, including episodes of the soap *Emergency Ward 10*, Lincoln had never before worked on a documentary.) In the end he made four full-length programmes and authored or co-authored as many books.

He contacted de Sède, who supplied him with copies of the photographs that had been used in his book, nearly all of which were stamped on the back 'Plantard' in purple ink. He also introduced Lincoln to the Bibliothèque Nationale, giving him the titles of some relevant works he had been unaware of, largely the aforementioned Plantard publications, also, *La Vraie Langue Celtique*, 1886, which had been written by the Abbé Henri Boudet, a friend of Saunière who had been curé of the neighbouring village of Rennes-le-Bain. The work had been privately printed in an edition of only 500, not all of which were distributed. De Sède stated that there were only two copies of it, one in the B.N. and one in a provincial library, and that both were missing presumed stolen. Nevertheless, Lincoln filled in an application fiche, and, to de Sède's astonishment, the book was delivered to the reading room. Lincoln thought his bewilderment showed that he was relying on "someone else's information". Indeed, since his *Accursed Treasure* discusses Boudet's work, complete with a quotation - though he had not himself then seen it - parts of the book must have been the work of this "someone else", whom we can suppose to have been Pierre Plantard.

In fact, *La Vraie Langue Celtique* is not quite so rare as one might expect. On returning to England, Lincoln learned that there was a copy in the reference section of Swiss Cottage Library in north

London. There is also a presentation copy, signed by the author, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. And, of course, since the 1970s it has been repeatedly reprinted for Rennes-le-Château enthusiasts.

So what bearing does this book have on Rennes-le-Château and its treasure? Boudet had the perennial philologist's dream of recovering the original language of the human race. It is doubtful if, in fact, there was one primeval tongue from which all others are descended, but even if there had been, it would be exceedingly implausible that Adam and Eve, as Boudet believed, spoke English! On this basis he derived the etymology of various biblical names like this: Adam was so called because God *added* him to Eve, the *mother* of all living, hence, 'Add-Dam'. "Abel presents the first image of death, from the crime of his elder brother, to *ape ... hell*." Noah comes from *know-how*, since he knew how to build an ark and save his family and the animals ... and so on.

Plantard provided a 20-page Preface to the 1978 reprint - the longest work to which he ever set his own name - in which he suggested that Boudet's true message was concealed rather than overt. He had included a map labelled "Rennes Celtique", which, Plantard observed, contains fourteen letters, corresponding to the number of days between the new and full moons, and the fourteen stations of the cross on the wall of the church at Rennes-le-Château (or anywhere else). There were also (buried) references to the Tarot, the geometry of the landscape, and much more. It is by now apparent that Plantard's most notable personality characteristic was a tendency to see hidden meanings in everything.

He further alleged that his grandfather, Charles Plantard, had visited Saunière and Boudet in 1892. As proof he reproduces a dedication, "Hommage respectueux de l'auteur, H. Boudet", which, he said, Boudet had written on a copy of *La Vraie Langue Celtique* that he gave to his ancestor. The authors of *The Tomb of God* observed that the handwriting matches that on the Bodleian Library copy, and so must be genuine; though, since no name of the recipient is given, there is no reason to accept that it was presented to Plantard's grandfather.

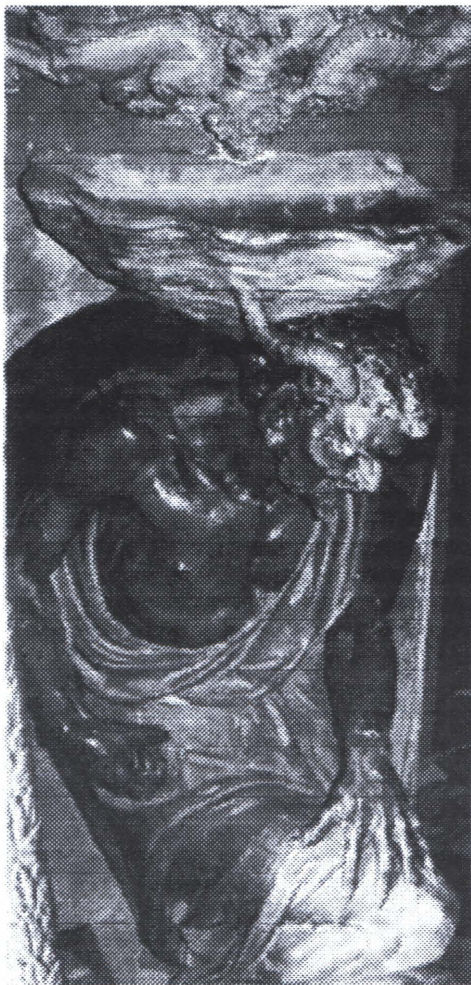
and its deposit slip for the Bibliothèque Nationale was dated 15 February, it would appear that the book had been the death of them. Yet, subsequently, researchers determined that it was only deposited on 20 March, the deposit slip having been deliberately falsified. Moreover, its subject matter - the thirteen sign zodiac - makes it clear that the real author was Pierre Plantard, and another re-



Returning to Henry Lincoln's research, he received a 'bombshell' when De Sède revealed the decipherment of the second coded parchment, which gave the message: "Shepherdess, no temptation. That Poussin, Teniers, hold the key; Peace 681. By the cross and this horse of God, I destroy this daemon of the guardian at noon. Blue apples."

This is in fact an anagram of the inscription on an eighteenth-century tomb in Rennes-le-Château, which almost certainly predates the 'encoded' message, hence the fact that the latter does not quite make sense, the author having to do the best he could with the letters he had. Lincoln did wonder how it could have been cracked; in fact this cannot be done without a plate alleged to come from Eugène Stublein's *Pierres Gravées du Languedoc*, supposedly published in 1884 but seen by no one, and in fact derived from an 'Antoine l'Ermite' (i.e. Pierre Plantard) publication of 1966. Moreover, when Lincoln first met Plantard in 1979, the latter informed him in a rare candid moment that the 'parchments' had been faked by his collaborator Philippe de Chérisey for a television programme. De Chérisey, an actor and comedian, later said that he did so at the instigation of Francis Blanche, a radio producer associated with *Signé Furax*, a series that gave its listeners spoof 'information', such as inventing a psychiatric hospital for mad plants.

Lincoln's first documentary, *The Lost Treasure of Jerusalem?*, 1972, simply suggested that the Templars had found a vast treasure in the Holy Land and taken it to France, where it was hidden and later found by Saunière. It provoked a strong public reaction, so he carried on researching and in 1974 made *The Priest, the Painter and the Devil*, which rather obscurely hinted that Diabolism was at the root of the mystery. His main evidence for this came from a Poussin painting, 'Les Bergers d'Arcadie', which shows a tomb closely resembling one that used to stand near Rennes-le-Château. The picture's proportions are based, like much Renaissance art, on the Golden Section, also known as 'Pentagonal geometry'; and the (inverted) Pentagram is nowadays a symbol of Satanism, so it follows that Saunière led a Satanic cult. Later,



**People think it very sinister that when Saunière renovated his church he placed a statue of the demon Asmodeus inside the doorway.**

he met Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, who were both interested in the Templars, and they began to collaborate in their investigations.

For the third film, *The Shadow of the Templars*, they wished to contact the Priory of Sion and, if possible, M. Plantard. A Paris-based researcher for the BBC, Jania Macgillivray, made enquiries and found that everyone was confused about the matter: "one journalist warned her, for example, that anyone probing Sion too closely sooner or later got killed. Another journalist told her that Sion had indeed existed during the Middle Ages, but no longer did today. An official of Grande Loge Alpina, on the other hand, reported that Sion did exist today but was a modern organisation - it had never, he said, existed in the past." By stressing the interest of the BBC, who have rather more prestige on the continent than they do in Britain itself, she was eventually able to arrange a meeting with Plantard and his entourage in a Paris cinema. As you would expect he spoke obscurely, hinting at things rather than stating

them, for instance:

Henry Lincoln: "Will the treasure of Rennes-le-Château ever be found?"

Pierre Plantard: "Here you are speaking of a material treasure, we are not talking of a material treasure. Let us say, quite simply, that there is a secret in Rennes-le-Château, and that it is possible there is something else around Rennes-le-Château."

After three meetings "we were not significantly wiser than we had been before."

Around this time, Plantard suddenly became Pierre Plantard de Saint-Clair, Count of Saint-Clair and Count of Rhédae. So far as is known, the title Count of Rhédae had become extinct in the thirteenth century. It is hard to see how there could ever have been a Count of Saint-Clair, since there is no such place, though the name does occur in compounds such as Saint-Clair-du-Rhône.

Lincoln seems to have felt that there was one key which would unlock the whole mystery, and this eventually led to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, 1982, which proposed that the true

secret was that the 'San Greal' (Holy Grail) was really the Sang Real, holy blood, that the Merovingian line was regarded as sacred because they were descended from Jesus Christ, thanks to a secret liaison with Mary Magdalene - an idea that must have astonished even Plantard. Since then the field has been wide open for all kinds of ideas, the Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe speculating that the Grail could be "an inexplicable artifact from an ancient or alien technology". David Wood thought that the geometry of the landscape around Rennes-le-Château proved that the Elohim, who came from Sirius, aeons ago established a base on Mars, which they kept supplied by cross-breeding with ape-like earth females, and using the more intelligent offspring as servants to harvest food for them, which was transported from Atlantis to Mars in huge spaceships.

All of these writers display a tendency to see mysteries in things that are actually quite usual. Among these is the Latin saying "Et in Arcadia ego", which is inscribed on the tomb shown in the aforementioned 'Les Bergers d'Arcadie'. This is usually translated as "And in Arcadia I", which is not a sentence, leading to suggestions that it might be an anagram or have some other kind of hidden meaning. Plantard's version, it will be recalled, made it "Et in Arcadia ego ... " implying that it was only the start of a longer statement. (Incidentally, the use of three stops to indicate a lacuna is a fairly modern practice, further proof that his coast of arms is not mediaeval.) Actually, though in Latin *et* can mean 'and', it can also have the sense 'even', as in Virgil's famous line *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, meaning 'I fear the Greeks even when they bring presents.' Also, as in many languages, the verb 'to be' is often omitted. The real meaning is "Even in Arcadia I am". Since this is written on a tomb, it obviously signifies: "Even in Arcadia I, death, am present". It is a reminder of human mortality, a common theme in Renaissance painting. In view of Wood's space theories, it is perhaps surprising that no one has tried to make it 'E.T. in Arcadia ego'.

People think it very sinister that when Saunière renovated his church he placed a statue of the demon Asmodeus inside the



doorway, and an inscription *Terribilis est locus iste* ("This place is terrible") over the porch. In fact, though it would be unusual in Britain or America, it is I believe quite common in French churches to include a depiction of a devil, hence the apocryphal story of the

had been the Abbé Ducaud-Bourget, a controversial Catholic traditionalist who opposed all reform within the Church. Ducaud-Bourget repeatedly denied it. So the assertion was retracted, but in a highly devious way. The Marquis de Chérisy informed Lincoln

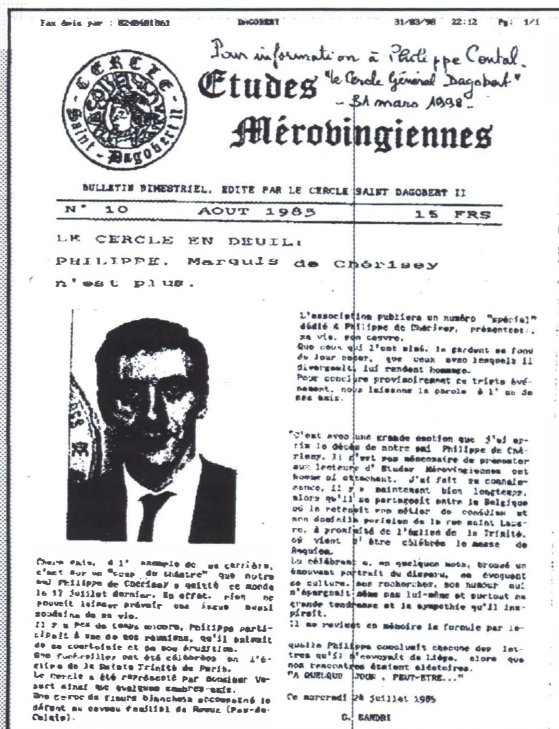
Evans was Lincoln's literary agent.

Plantard announced his intention of suing for libel. It is doubtful if he would have succeeded. In the first place, the tract was anonymous and bore no address. Secondly, Plantard told Lincoln, it contained a 'highly confidential' fact about himself (that in 1952 he had transferred a quantity of gold from France to Switzerland on behalf of de Gaulle): "How had the writer of the tract learned of it ... ?" The most obvious explanation is that Plantard had written it himself, as a twisted form of self publicity.

Early the following year he sent Lincoln a copy of an official Priory of Sion document, dated 17 January 1984, which accused Chaumeil of receiving two boxes of Priory archives, covering 1935 to 1955, stolen from de Chérisy in 1967. It was signed John E. Drick, Gaylord Freeman, A. Robert Abboud and Pierre Plantard. Drick, Freeman and Abboud all proved to have been directors of the First National Bank of Chicago. But Drick had died on 16 February 1982, and Freeman, when interviewed by one of the bank's security officers who had become curious about the affair, said that he had never heard of the Priory of Sion or Pierre Plantard.

The same security officer discovered that the signatures of the three Americans on the Priory document were absolutely identical to those on the 1974 Annual Report of the First National Bank of Chicago. This suggested that those on the Priory document were simply a photocopy. But when his secretary tried to photocopy the 1974 report, the signatures would not take. This was because they were made in light blue ink without graphite content, precisely to prevent such unauthorised use. So how had Plantard got hold of them? Lincoln planned to challenge him on this at their meeting in La Tipia on 30 September 1984, but when he pulled the document from a briefcase, Plantard said: "Those were made with a stamp, you know." Such stamps are routinely used when a senior figure has to 'sign' many copies of the same document. Evidently, this particular stamp had somehow come into the possession of Plantard.

Three weeks later Plantard sent them copies of letters from himself dated 10 and 11 July



De Chérisy said he faked the documents at the instigation of Francis Blanche, a radio producer associated with *Signé Furax*, a series that gave its listeners spoof 'information', such as inventing a psychiatric hospital for mad plants.

elderly Frenchwoman who was seen to light a candle in front of an image of Beelzebub, and, when the priest remonstrated with her, replied: "But father, isn't it good to have friends on both sides?" *Terribilis est locus iste* is a quotation from the Latin Bible: Jacob, having awoken from his dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder to heaven, says: "How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:17, Douay version) The word *terribilis*, a translation of the Hebrew *nora*, really signifies 'awesome'. The church is awesome because it is the house of God, not because it is the centre of an international (or even interplanetary) conspiracy. Accordingly, this verse is spoken as the Introit to the mass for the dedication of a church. (I am grateful to former Catholic priest Colin Hamer for pointing this out to me.)

More strange assertions continued to be made in pseudonymous tracts. *The Circle of Ulysses* by 'Jean Delaude', 1977, stated that since the death of Jean Cocteau in 1963 the Grand Master

distinguished Englishmen, Captain Ronald Stansmore Nutting, the Right Honourable Viscount Leathers, Major Hugh Murchison Clowes, and Lord Selborne (all by then deceased). These appeared to prove that in 1956 these men had imported to Britain the parchments found by Saunière, which had been inherited by his niece, Madam James. It was stated that they included genealogies proving that the 'House of Plantard, Counts of Rhédae' were the direct descendants of Dagobert II. He provided photographs of the documents, enabling Lincoln and friends to check out their veracity. They eventually demonstrated them to be forgeries.

In mid-December 1983 a flyer was widely circulated throughout France alleging that former Plantard associate Jan-Luc Chaumeil was about to publish a five-volume treatise on the doctrine of the Priory of Sion. It contained highly insulting statements about Plantard and said that since 1981 the Priory had been "directed by an Englishwoman named Ann Evans, the true author of this paranoid fiction!" In fact Ann



1984, addressed to members of the Priory of Sion, in which he announced his resignation as Grand Master, on the grounds of health. Lincoln noted that they "effectively, and very precisely, covered each of the points raised verbally in our meeting three weeks before ... It was almost as if the letters of resignation had been composed *after* this meeting" - as no doubt they were. After that, little more was heard of Pierre Plantard, though soon another tract appeared, *The Scandals of the Priory of Sion*, by 'Cornelius' linking him to the Italian Mafia, the P2 Masonic Lodge, and the death of banker Roberto Calvi, found hanging under Blackfriars Bridge in London in 1982. But it was not the end of the Priory.

Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln's second book, *The Messianic Legacy*, included a review of the public response to their first. They complained about many correspondents "who, quite inexplicably, persisted in confronting us with the Shroud of Turin. 'What about the Shroud of Turin?' we were asked repeatedly. (What indeed?) Or, 'How does the Shroud of Turin affect your thesis?' It was extraordinary how frequently this *non sequitur* occurred." It seems that this passage gave someone the idea of making a connection.

In October 1988 it was announced that carbon dating suggested that the Shroud was a

late mediaeval forgery. In the wake of interest, paranormal researcher Lynn Picknett gave interviews about it on London's LBC radio and the BBC World Service. It was well known in 'Shroudie' circles that at that time Picknett was having a relationship with Ian Wilson, the best known defender of the Shroud's genuineness.

Soon afterwards she received the first of a series of letters signed 'Giovanni', which informed her that the Turin Shroud was actually created by none other than Leonardo da Vinci, by means of "a sort of alchemical imprinting", in other words a primitive form of photography, more than three centuries before Daguerre. He claimed to be a member of a dissident faction of the Priory of Sion, and advised her to read *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. It may be presumed that, since da Vinci was supposed to have once been their Grand Master, this proved that the Turin Shroud *did* affect any thesis on the subject. Now, anyone could claim to represent the Priory of Sion, but this man does seem to have been connected to Plantard, since, when she wrote to the latter, his secretary replied that it might be possible to help, but "perhaps you yourselves already have information on this subject?", a hint that they knew what she had been told. (That da Vinci faked the Shroud

had been suggested a few months beforehand by Anthony Harris in *The Sacred Virgin and the Holy Whore*. Harris's primary thesis was that Jesus Christ was a woman, hence he had needed to be able to reject the bearded Jesus of Turin as fraudulent.)

Eventually Picknett met Giovanni at the Cumberland Hotel near Marble Arch in London. It appeared from their conversation that he wanted what he had told her to be passed on to Ian Wilson, as the foremost "Shroud scholar". Unfortunately for him, Wilson had recently finished his affair with her. However, if Giovanni's final intention was to have his theories publicised, then this happened anyway with the book that Picknett co-authored with Clive Prince, *Turin Shroud: In Whose Image?*

Coming down to the present day, Dan Brown's 2003 thriller, *The Da Vinci Code*, is based on the assumption that the Priory of Sion and its great secret are facts. At the time of writing (November 2004) this novel is at the top of the fiction bestseller list in Britain, and has spawned a series of non-fiction works intended to inform readers about its historical background, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, *The Da Vinci Code Decoded*, etc., at least fourteen so far. Where Plantard sowed, others continue to reap.

## PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES Continued from page 3

more 'unbelief' was seen as subversive of Puritan standards across class lines and conducive to wild, antinomian behaviour. Psychological researchers and parapsychologists pandered to the mood of upper class fear, and presented their topics as defences against communism and as a defence of traditional values.

But the late 1960s things began to change. With the rise of the permissive society, student revolt, new religious movements and the drug culture, the paranormal seemed less of a defence against antinomian wildness, than part of it, no longer a bulwark against atheistic communism and materialism but part of a wider irrationalist revolt, which threatened divine reason. Many scientists began to fear that having fought their way up the cultural ladder against traditional elites they might be dethroned almost at once.

CSICOP took up cudgels against these threats to reason, in particular it paranormal's apparent promise of something for nothing. Defence of the Puritan values of hard work and hard study became quite a major theme. Some like Carl Sagan saw science as the candle of reason in a darkness of irrational, dare one say animal, passions.

Thus two religious traditions, which we might identify as the Dionysian and the Apollonian battle on, with their opposed views of the sacred. For the Dionysian the sacred lies in a transcendental realm crashing into safe rational world from some wilderness outside consensus reality, producing shattering spiritual experiences, affirmed by personal experience which must not be challenged by others.

For the Apollonian the sacred lies in the habitat of reason and responsible behaviour on the one hand, and the order and harmony of the universe conceived of as a mathematical habitat on the other.

And as the two lock horns they forget to notice the rise of a third religious tradition, that of the Holy One True Book interpreted as an office memo from God the Chief Executive or Village Elder.

Issue Two of the newly-renamed *Magonia* kicked off with an article by the Northern Irish researcher John Hind (one of many serious-minded people who have been driven away from the subject by activities of the lunatic fringe) in which he describes a classification and recording system for coding UFO reports and possibly using them in a computer database. Now making up classification schemes for UFO reports in something of a cottage industry, by John Hind's was rather better thought out than most, being based on the motif classification systems which are already used by folklore students to identify and compare elements of folktales.

This was a serious and well thought out proposal, and like all such in the field of ufology, it sank without trace.



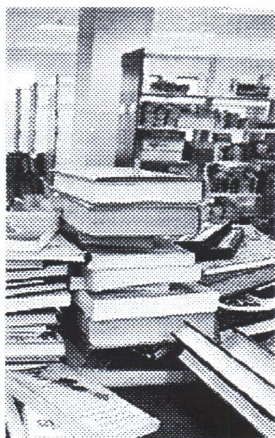
The article finished with the intriguing but baffling statement: "... the New Ufology is in danger of degenerating into a theoretical fashion house seducing the intellect with black satin theories, characterized by their plunging necklines and high frontal slits."

Nigel Watson began another of his detailed case investigations of characters and events on the farthest shores of ufology. The Shadowland of Ufology", a series of incidents

which linked UFOs, religious symbolism and what appeared to be a complex family dynamic.

Tucked away in the book review section was a note on Allan Hendry's *The UFO Handbook*, perhaps one of the most influential UFO books ever. Working as CUFOS's (only?) full time employee, he investigated several hundred cases for the Center and formed much of the basis for the more sceptical approaches to ufology which developed, largely in the UK and Europe. The main thrust of Hendry's argument was that there was very little, if any, difference between the types of reported events which were determined as identified objects, and those which remained unidentified after. His book is as valuable today as ever, despite being misrepresented as hard-core 'skepticism'





# BOOK REVIEWS

All reviews by Peter Rogerson

**Lyndal Roper. *Witch Craze: terror and fantasy in Baroque Germany*. Yale University Press, 2004. £25.00.**

Something very strange was happening to teenager Regina Groninger. At night a strange figure would come to her, with a head as black and round as a cannonball, on which there was no face at all, its arms thin and withered and surmounted by pointed claws, and with the feet of a goat. She said that it "lies on her whole body and presses on her in such a way that ... her shit goes out of her body ... (and) ... put something pointed like a spindle in the front part of her body ... from which she felt great pains, but she did not feel that anything was left behind in her body, and when he had to do with her thus, it lasted quarter of an hour."

Today such a story might lead to a visit from Budd Hopkins, but in early 18th century Augsburg it led to an accusation of witchcraft, and Regina only escaped with her life by starting to giggle during the court proceedings and saying she had made the whole thing up. Times were changing and the judges were prepared to believe this, a century earlier she would not have been so lucky. Lyndal Roper is somewhat puzzled by this story and wonders if it glosses a case of actual sexual abuse, but *Magonia* readers will perhaps detect a classic account of sleep paralysis.

A century earlier, according to Roper, such a teenager would not have been suspected as being a witch, unless she was a subsidiary of an older woman, for she argues, most of those accused were post-menopausal women, and most of their accusers were married women of child-bearing age. Roper's explanation centres on the demographic situation in Germany in the Early Modern period, situated on a knife edge between over and under population. Many of the inhabitants had to delay marriage to conserve scarce resources, thus the future of the community lay with those women who were child bearing wives. The infertile, such as elderly women, were thought to envy their status, and to pose a threat. Sexual desire on the part of non fertile women was seen as somehow contrary to nature, and to pose a threat to communal fertility. This, and perhaps general generational tensions, led to such

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women being denounced by neighbours and by sometimes their own families. Roper is shocked by the cruelty and sexual violence shown in many such cases, but even today we see many shocking examples of 'elder abuse'.

Under pressure from torture, or perhaps because they came to believe in the accusations made against them, the accused would make confessions centred around not so much scholarly notions of the Sabbat, but from fantasies constructed from their daily lives.

Toward the end of the witch hunting period the focus of concern shifted from older women to wayward children and teenagers. Looking at these cases, it seems clear that some of these children's behaviour would, even (or rather especially) today bring them to the attention of social workers, or make them the subject of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

Only as statistics and the new rationalism replaced notions of supernatural power as the means of interpreting demographic and social crises did the witchcraft accusations fade away. But we Magonians know that they haven't really gone, they are hiding in the dark places of the imagination, waiting for new labels to clothe themselves in, so they can again venture into the light of day.

**Randall Sullivan. *The Miracle Detective: an investigation of holy visions*. Little Brown, 2004 £18.99.**

Journalist Randall Sullivan, inspired by a piece about a glowing figure which appeared in a tacky picture in a hovel of a trailer home, sets out to investigate Roman Catholic miracles. The core of the book deals with the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje in Bosnia and Scottsdale in Arizona, and the author's reactions to them. It has to be said that Sullivan's presentation of himself at the start of this journey as a 'non Roman Catholic' and non-believer does not ring entirely true, and one suspects he was in fact a lapsed Catholic, and one with a guilt conscience over an involvement in two abortions. This makes him perhaps a less than objective witness.

Therefore, to some extent this book is seen through the eyes of at least a half-believer, it does provide some insight into classic cases of where apparently ordinary people report extraordinary experiences, which are interpreted in terms of the beliefs of their times and cultures. Like many varieties of anomalous personal experiences they seem to alternate between the truly puzzling, which might make even the most sceptical start thinking that something really spooky is going on, with the utterly absurd. It is perhaps of some comfort to find that the Roman Catholic Church's leading theologians find themselves as conflicted by all of this, as any ufologist or psychical researcher.

One of the problems with this book, as with so many similar ones, is that it never clear where the author's information comes from, and as much of what is related is hearsay, it is not possible to make any clear evaluation of the evidence. I get the impression that we would have to know a lot more about the personal and family backgrounds of the main participants before we could reach any sensible conclusion as to what happened. Also, though there is reasonable coverage of the war in Bosnia and its antecedents, the book rather shys away from the background of theological politics involved. This comes out clearer in the Scottsdale saga, where the prophecies start to echo the beliefs of the supporters of Patrick Buchanan and the militias. The



Marian messages are usually concerned with defending traditionalist Catholic viewpoints against modernist critics, something which has been the case since the nineteenth century onwards. It is true that one of the Medjugorje seers did produce a more inclusive message which did not go down terribly well with the neighbours, but that has to be balanced against the usual warnings of hideous chastisements if sinners don't repent, and the grand secrets for which the world is not yet ready, something which is more reminiscent of teenage petulance than anything else.

There are the usual side stories, the woman who claims to have been sexually abused by her wealthy satanist freemason father, the woman who interprets her husband's sleep paralysis episode as a demonic assault and then starts seeing demon dogs all over her house, and the husband's meetings with strange individuals, whom he interprets as demons, but whom Budd Hopkins or David Jacobs would regard as hybrids, and the rest of us as just those strange characters you meet all over the place.

**P. G. Maxwell-Stuart. *Wizards: a History*. Tempus, 2004. £ 16.99.**

This is a more scholarly book than the one by Alan Baker, with the same title. It is a study of the ritual magician in western culture from classical times to Crowley. For *Magonia* readers, the ritual magician can be seen as the contactee of his age. There are some differences to be sure, for most modern contactees and abductees 'the Other' crashes in on their world without bidding, whereas the ritual magician sought contact on his own terms through the performing of complex and burdensome rituals. Of course some contactees actively sought contact, by means of meditation or attempts to telepathy, such as silently saying "calling all occupants of interplanetary craft". In some cases, such as Bender, it was claimed that this resulted in contact of a decidedly unwanted kind.

The entities that ritual magicians sought to contact were a good deal scarier than even the meanest grey. Either angels or devils, they were beings of power, descendants of the forces that tribal shamans sought to contact and establish alliances with. If you

ventured out of the magic circle or let them in, then rather literally there would be all Hell to pay. The ritual magician went through all of this for much the same reason that CETI projectors seek contact with the far stars through radio telescopes: they wanted the wisdom and power of the Others for themselves. Sadly when confronted with the powerful Others who could offer them the secret of the universe on the equivalent of the back of an envelope, all too often they settled for a spell which would get them into the knickers of the local barmaid. One suspects contactees come up with equally banal requests.

Unless we propose to start believing in literal demons, we have to ask what the forces that ritual magicians thought they had contacted represent. It would appear that they represent the chaotic forces of wild nature, kept at bay by the symbolic camp fire of the magician's magic circle. The power that the magician seeks is that of wild nature untrammelled by human mores. No wonder that this power seemed so scary.

**John Robert Colombo. *The Midnight Hour: Candian accounts of eerie experiences*. Howslow, 2004. \$17.95.**

**Dara de Faoite. *Paranormal Ireland*. Mavrick House, 2004. £9.99.**

**Jenny Randles. *Supernatural Isle of Man*. Robert Hale, 2003 (i.e. 2004). £20.00.**

**Christian Saunders. *Into the Dragon's Lair: a supernatural history of Wales*. Gwass Carreg Gwlach, 2003. £ 6.55.**

Some of the most useful Fortean studies are those of particular regions, they can be especially good when a deal of local research has gone into them. This batch however are something of a disappointment.

John Roberto Colombo covers the largest area, a whole massive country. More than the other writers he is a collector of modern folklore, and in this book 'modern' not only includes traditional texts but internet postings as well. Even in these modern settings traditional tales of ghosts, poltergeists, premonitions, etc. tend to dominate. While these stories are scarcely usable as quasi-scientific evidence for something or other, most suggest the important role that such narratives can have in allowing people to make sense of their lives.

Jenny Randles' book is rather par for the course for the Hale series, a mixture of traditional tales with contemporary memorates. No account of the IOM paranormal would be complete without a mention of Geff the talking mongoose, and Jenny includes a sensibly sceptical summary of this, though perhaps downplaying the atmosphere of repressed sexuality that can be detected in some accounts. I have the gut feeling that this was the sort of family which in today's world social workers would be taking rather an interest.

Another interesting tale is of a boy "taken" by the fairies who is able to see but not to interact with his home, a motif encountered in some 1980s Spanish and Latin American abduction tales. Alas it is not properly referenced so its not possible to check with an original source, to see if it is a story which was supposed to have occurred not long before it was told, or is a piece of pure tradition.

The other two books are worse. Much of *Paranormal Ireland* seems to be taken from tabloid newspaper stories with minimal editing, and genuine memorates of ghosts, monsters, UFOs and the like tend to be drowned out by the usual self proclaimed mediums, psychics, white witches,

exorcists, 'therapists', 'researchers' and like attention seekers. These people are always only too willing to oblige newspapers with quotes, and seem to run a close second to football managers for cliché-speak.


Not even the story of a hairy hominid in a patch of woodland between Rhos-on-Sea and Llandudno (an area I walked several times in my childhood, though now much built up) can redeem Christian Saunders' book, with its rehash of the Oliver Larch lie and an uncritical rendition of the Ripperston farm saga. Then there is the padding, for example the inclusion of the 10 Rillington Place murders because Timothy Evans came from Wales. A poor reason for including a London murder in a book on 'the supernatural in Wales'.

**James Houran (editor). *From Shaman to Scientist: essays on humanity's search for spirits*. The Scarecrow Press, 2004. £31.00**

Whatever their exact ontological status, ghosts are certainly social facts and can have immense human meaning. James Houran had earlier edited a collection which included some important papers on the subject. This anthology, concentrating more on a historical approach is of less interest. Topics covered range from the anomalous experiences in early cultures and the rise of shamanism in early cultures, ghost stories in classical and medieval cultures, brain structure and the world of spirits, poltergeist research in 19th and early 20th century Europe, American children's ghost stories, the modern obsession with orb photographs and similar techno-occultism.

The main problem with this sort of format is that rarely do papers have the space to develop their theme, and they vary in quality.

For *Magonia* readers perhaps John Potts paper on ghost hunting in the 21st century will be the most interesting. Potts looks at the rise of pseudoscientific ghost hunting societies often armed with all sorts of equipment and looking for technological 'proof' obtained through photographs of 'orbs' or recordings of electronic voices. He argues that these groups rarely critically examine evidence, and tend to assume, rather than demonstrate, the correctness of their theories. He

  
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notes that these groups are part of a tradition in which new sciences or technologies are ascribed occult qualities, examples being electricity and radio. He hints of a hidden history of occultism/pioneer radio connections in the period before routine commercial broadcasting which looks worthy of further notice.

Christa Tuczay's article on classical and medieval ghost beliefs is of interest because it shows how different these beliefs were to our modern ones. Norse ghosts in particular were viewed as reanimated bodies rather than ethereal spirits. This hints that our modern notions of haunted houses might be more recent than is usually thought.

Today's ghosts are less the harbingers from heaven and hell than the product of only half-believed-in play realities, passing things which fade like dreams in the daylight, or inhabitants of some enchanted realm. A number of writers have commented over the years on this enchanted boundary, in which at the time extraordinary experiences seem to take place, but which seems to fade away at a rate somewhere between waking from a dream and falling out of love. These realms seem to be constructed out of some interplay between altered states of consciousness and small group dynamics.

**Neil Badmington. *Alien Chic: posthumanism and the other within*. Routledge, 2004 £18.99.** Badmington explores the image of the alien in post-war popular culture, and how over the years popular culture has presented the alien as everything from total enemy to loveable saviour. He argues that these images of the alien allow us to explore the meaning of what it is to be human. This includes a study of the abduction narratives presented by John Mack, and the proliferation of alien imagery in kitsch. While portions of the study are of interest, there is a too frequent obligatory tour of the theories of Derrida and company, who manage to write quite substantial paragraphs without actually saying anything that actually means anything.

While Badmington presents Mack as one of those who argue for the humanness of the other, and his stories as reflecting an openness to it, he avoids really

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coming to grips with the essential alienation of many of his informants from their own humanity and the workaday world in which they find themselves, and Mack's own conflictual relationship with modernity, covert racism and obsession with violent apocalyptic imagery, and apparent indifference to mass human suffering.

**Mike McAvennie (editor). *Sci Fi Declassified: the Roswell Dig Diaries*. Pocket Books, 2004 \$14.95.**

In order to appear to be a 'serious' and socially responsible TV channel, Sci Fi Channel decided to sponsor some 'real science'. Their choice on this occasion was to sponsor an archaeological excavation at the so-called Roswell debris site in September and October 2002. This was headed by a real archaeologist, Dr Bill Doleman, head of the University of New Mexico's contract archaeology team. As resident UFO consultants Sci Fi channel had Don Schmitt and a sidekick, Tom Carey. These two still seem to believe the same old tales told by the likes of Glenn Dennis et al, and have built a timeline based on their tall tales, rather than actually contemporaneous sources.

Despite this Doleman actually seems to have done real archaeology and real science; but alas for ufologists there are no smoking guns or massively

anomalistic finds. Doleman is intrigued by a sort of gouge in the ground some way off from the alleged impact site, but this turns out to be already visible in an aerial photograph taken in 1946. True believers are likely to be disappointed by this lack of sensation and finds large parts of the book rather heavy going; sceptics will sniff out some of the little asides which illuminate ufological relationships, and perhaps some people will decide that archaeology can be a lot more fun than they imagined.

**Stephen Spignesi. *The Weird 100*. Citadel Press, 2004. \$16.95**

**Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe. *Unsolved Mysteries of the Sea*. Hounslow Books, 2004.**

Ufologists and psychical researchers often complain that sceptics like CSICOP downgrade their subjects by mixing them up with all sorts of occult notions like divination by means of aardvarks entrails, astrology or the prophecies of Nostradamus. This is just what Stephen Spignesi, who is not a sceptic, does here. Ufology and bits of psychical research and cryptozoology are mixed together promiscuously with topics like numerology, astrology, various Biblical and Roman Catholic bits, and the odd historical mystery such as the Mary Celeste. Perhaps this allows him to act as though he had a critical faculty from time to time, and that there are some things he doesn't buy.

But he definitely buys ufology, and crop circles and all sorts of tales of the afterlife and so on, and really this book never gets beyond a rehash of the same old stuff.

The same could be said of the latest piece of nonsense from the Fanthorpe's, only the stale grub is seasoned with a hash of Philadelphia Experiment, Atlantis, fake ghost stories such as the Lady Lovibond tale, and some of the spoof tales in *Ghosts of the Broads* (a work of fiction satirising the likes of Elliott O'Donnell, which is often quoted as a work of true ghost stories, by stupid and lazy writers). To cap it we have that well known con-man and producer of fake Nessie photographs Frank Searle treated as a serious authority. I am afraid that the Fanthorpes really are establishing themselves as the unthinking persons' Forteanes.

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the end of the  
magazine, it doesn't  
mean you've come to  
the end of Magonia.**

Besides this quarterly magazine with its articles, regular columns and reviews, there's also Magonia Supplement, on line and on paper, and a website with articles from 35 years of publication.

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[magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk](http://magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk)

And if you live in London or are passing through, you are always welcome to visit our regular get-togethers on the first Sunday of the month at the Railway pub in Putney, from 7.15 pm onwards.